

ABC Middle School Sample Writing Policy

Introduction

The sample writing policy (from ABC Middle School) is provided in order to guide to schools as they review and develop school writing policies and plans. This resource, along with the WebEx, *Writing Policy for SBDM Councils*, will be useful in guiding school-based decision-making councils and literacy teams as they begin this work.

The sample exemplifies a writing policy that may have been developed to adhere to previous legislation and accountability for the Kentucky Writing Program. The goal of this activity is to help school councils and literacy teams think through the process of developing school writing policies and plans that meet the requirements of legislation under Senate Bill 1 2009. The activity is structured as recommendations provided to ABC Middle School on how its council may revise its policy.

How to use this document

The sample policy is one page. Hotlinks are provided for ease of movement through each section of the policy and direct readers to the guidance suggested to ABC Middle School. After reviewing ABC Middle School's policy, use the hotlinks to access discussion points.

- **Overall Impressions and Final Thoughts** gives an overview of what ABC Middle School should think about as they begin and end the revision process.
- **Revising Administration Responsibilities, Revising Teacher Responsibilities, and Revising Student Responsibilities** provide discussion points for how to address various stakeholder responsibilities in policy and how these responsibilities have changed with SB 1 2009 legislation.

This sample is in no way meant to be a required format. It is simply designed to provide schools a means for understanding how the revision process may work and to help school councils and literacy teams understand the changes that have occurred in writing requirements. It is important that schools develop policies that meet the needs of their students, school and district.

ABC Middle School Writing Policy

[Overall Impressions](#)

Adopted by SBDM August 6, 2000

The following responsibilities outline the role of the administrators, teachers and students in supporting the school writing policy. The principal shall communicate and monitor implementation of the responsibilities. The school council shall revisit this policy annually.

Administration Responsibilities

- Identify a knowledgeable teacher as writing cluster leader.
- Support cluster leader in his or her role.
- Provide time and resources for scoring portfolios.
- Ensure that all teachers are adequately trained to score writing portfolios.
- Ensure that all teachers are familiar with the Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric early in the school year.
- Oversee the collection and movement of portfolios.
- Provide professional development and resources to help support and improve writing within the school.

[Revising Administration Responsibilities](#)

[Revising Teacher Responsibilities](#)

Teacher Responsibilities

- Include the three types of writing (to learn, to demonstrate learning and for publication) regularly in instruction in all classrooms.
- Provide opportunities for students to publish written work both within and outside of school.
- Guide students in the development of authentic, polished pieces for the portfolio.
 - 6th grade:
 - Language arts - reflective, personal/literary and transactive pieces for portfolio
 - Content areas – polished transactive piece for portfolio
 - 7th grade:
 - Language arts - reflective, personal/literary and transactive pieces for portfolio
 - Content areas – polished transactive piece for portfolio
 - 8th grade:
 - On demand forms of writing placed in portfolio (letter, editorial, article, speech)
- Model and practice with students open response questions (1 per month).
- Provide regular opportunities for students to practice on demand writing.
- Participate in scoring training and scoring portfolios.

Student Responsibilities

- Apply criteria of Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric.
- Ensure that written work is their own, avoiding plagiarism.
- Complete grade level portfolio requirements.

[Revising Student Responsibilities](#)

[Final Thoughts](#)

Overall Impressions

ABC Middle School needs to be aware of how requirements around writing have changed with new legislation. Overall, this plan reflects past legislation.

The new law encourages schools to think differently about writing. Senate Bill 1 defines writing as “a purposeful act of thinking and expression that uses language to explore ideas and communicate meaning to others. Writing is a complex, multifaceted act of communication.” No longer is writing referred to as simply writing on paper, but as a “multifaceted act of communication” and may include a variety of purposes, audiences and forms of communication, including speech & media.

In addition, the focus shifts from students producing a piece of writing to involving students in the process of learning to be effective communicators/writers.

The law requires councils to “adopt policies that determine the writing program for its school.” Therefore, ABC Middle School will need to decide the components of the school’s writing program.

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Revising Administration Responsibilities

Individual student portfolio scores are no longer part of state level accountability. Therefore, scoring portfolios, scoring training and cluster leaders are no longer required. However, literacy leaders are still valuable in the school to ensure a cohesive approach to literacy instruction.

Collections of student work related to writing and communication skills are still required per Senate Bill 1 2009, and they must follow the student from grade to grade and school to school. Therefore, ABC Middle School's SBDM Council policy will need to address how portfolios can be used to monitor and support individual student growth in writing and communication skills. The purpose of the collection is to show growth in the student's writing and communication skills over time and to reflect student's interests. How this is done is left to ABC Middle School to decide based on their policy and plan. They may choose to have students make a number of final selections that are revised, edited and published. They may choose to have selections that show evidence of feedback from teachers and peers. The quantity and types of evidence should be determined by the school curriculum and aligned to the *Kentucky Core Academic Standards*. The collections should also be aligned with the requirements of the program review process.

Individual and descriptive feedback on student writing and communications is also required. Feedback may be in the form of conferencing, discussions and/or rubrics. Schools may choose to use the Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric, parts of the rubric, or choose other rubrics based on identified needs. The goal is to provide descriptive feedback on students' communications in order to improve their learning. KDE encourages schools to provide feedback to students on their communication strengths and weaknesses. Schools should consider the methods by which teachers analyze student work and the criteria and standards by which work will be measured, as well as how the student is engaged in self-assessment. A student's growth over time will be the outcome of the processes ABC Middle School has in place.

ABC Middle School should consider the types of student work that can be collected to represent the creative and innovative writing and communication opportunities offered. ABC Middle School should develop collections that exhibit 21st Century types of communication.

Professional development and support is an important role of SBDM council. Ensuring that students are actively engaged in using communication skills regularly in every class is the most important charge of ABC Middle School's SBDM council. Teachers and faculty require on-going professional learning in order to effectively embed communication in instruction.

Monitoring the school's writing and communications program is necessary. Instead of relying on portfolio scoring as in the past, ABC Middle may decide that an on-going analysis of student work to identify instructional implications is more beneficial. In addition, monitoring may include other forms of data collection about the school's program (classroom observations, discussions from professional learning communities, etc.) It is not necessarily an end of year look at a compiled formal portfolio. However, the SBDM council will need to establish in policy the procedures for reporting evidence that meet the goals of the school's program.

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Revising Teacher Responsibilities

While it remains a best practice to include three types of writing (to learn, to demonstrate learning and for publication) across all classrooms, ABC Middle School should think how this may be expanded to include a variety of real-world communications and use of technological tools. In addition, the ways in which students may publish their work should be enhanced beyond sharing in paper form.

With Senate Bill 1 2009, there is no longer a requirement for specific forms of writing, nor for a specific number of pieces, to be collected in a portfolio. Schools can now consider collections of student work beyond a paper portfolio and collections beyond written work. For example, student work may include multi-media presentations, recorded speeches, blogs, videos/digital recordings, etc. to represent real world forms of communication.

Schools should also create collections of work that flow naturally from the content being taught and grade-level curriculum expectations. ABC Middle School's council needs to understand that student work should be driven not by forms of writing, but by authentic learning opportunities and student choice. It is recommended that schools continue a schoolwide focus for writing and communications. The SBDM council should consider the communications that students might share beyond the classroom in the real world of science, math, health, history or other areas.

When schools plan to prepare students for on-demand assessment, they need to keep in mind the real purpose of the assessment. On-demand writing assessments provide students the opportunity to independently demonstrate the communication skills they have developed through instruction. These include: identifying purpose and audience; developing ideas; planning and revising; proofing and editing. As ABC Middle School's SBDM council develops policy regarding on-demand writing, they should think about how writing instruction throughout the year, rather than test practice, can improve on-demand performance. Of course, students will need some practice with understanding prompts and timed-writing, but test prep practice should not be the focus throughout the year.

SBDM councils should also consider best practice for preparing students for open-response assessments. Focus should be on students' learning to demonstrate knowledge of content by fully communicating their answers in clearly written responses. Adversely, setting a number of prompts to "practice" does not provide the same instructional value.

As mentioned previously, there is no longer a requirement to score portfolios. However, councils should consider how teachers will be involved in providing on-going descriptive feedback to students on their writing and communication skills. Teachers may also be involved in a summative analysis of student's writing collections to inform curricular and instructional changes that may need to be made.

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Revising Student Responsibilities

As mentioned previously, schools are not required to use the Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric to score student work. However, students should learn the criteria, be it the Kentucky Writing Rubric or other chosen criteria by the school, used to evaluate their writing and communication skills. Policy may set forth how students will be involved in ownership of their learning (goal setting; reflection on rubrics; self-assessment; self-selection and justification of work that best represents their development and growth as communicators, etc.). ABC Middle School's policy should reflect how often (on what schedule) this will occur.

Students are responsible for producing their own original work. This means teachers must also make sure students know what it means to plagiarize and help students learn strategies for avoiding plagiarism.

ABC Middle School's council may wish to revise grade-level student requirements based on the legislative changes already discussed. Of course, grade-level requirements placed in policy would need to meet the needs of the students and the expectations of the *Kentucky Core Academic Standards*.

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Final Thoughts

As ABC Middle School's council concludes revisions to their writing policy, they need to be sure they have addressed the requirements included in Senate Bill 1 2009. These requirements include:

- Multiple opportunities for students to develop complex communication skills for a variety of purposes
- Access to and use of technology tools
- Access to and use of language resources
- Feedback to students on their writing and communication skills
- Procedures for developing and monitoring portfolios
- Identifying responsibility for review of portfolios and feedback to students
- The use of the portfolio
 - for determining student's performance in communication
 - for feedback to students regarding their writing and communication skills

Throughout the process of policy development, ABC Middle School's council should keep in mind that the overall purpose of the policy is to improve the quality of student's writing and communication skills. Therefore, other components or policies, as determined by school needs, may be necessary to guarantee a quality writing and communications program.

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